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ABSTRACT

One consequence of school-university collaboration can be the impact of a school and specifically a social studies department on the university's teacher candidates. After seven years and the placement of 36 students, the teachers in the social studies department at Woodford County High School in central Kentucky wondered about their long-term influence. In the fall of 2000, with the help of a University of Kentucky collaborator, answers were sought in phone, face-to-face, e-mail, and letter interviews with alumni. The paper is divided into the following sections: an explanation of the school-university collaboration, a report on demographic information and job satisfaction, an analysis of what student teachers said they gained from their year at Woodford County High School, and the authors' reactions and questions. (BT)

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Influence Continues:
The Impact of One Social Studies Department on Preservice Social Studies Teachers

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One consequence of school-university collaboration can be the impact of a school and specifically a social studies department on the university's teacher candidates. After seven years and the placement of 36 students, the teachers in the social studies department at Woodford County High School in central Kentucky wondered about their long-term influence. In fall 2000, with the help of our university collaborator, we sought anwers in interviews by phone and face-to-face, email and letter, with as many alumni as we could find.

This paper describes what we learned. It is divided into the following sections: an explanation of the school-university collaboration, a report on demographic information and job satisfaction, an analysis of what student teachers said they gained from their year at Woodford County High School, and our reactions and questions.

The School/University Collaboration:

Woodford County High School's (WCHS) social studies department began to host a group of students for a year of field experience and student teaching in 1993. In summer 1993, Fannin, recently profiled as Mr. Franklin in *Theory and Practice in Social Education* (Fickel, 2000), asked Wilson, the social studies teacher educator with whom he and three other WCHS teachers had worked in their preservice program if she would be interested in placing a group of students at their rural/suburban school contiguous to Lexington/Fayette County, Kentucky. Fannin had been part of an experimental group of student teachers whom the university educator had organized at another high school during part of his Masters with Initial Certification program, and he had found that observing and working with several teachers was meaningful. Wilson had placed individual student teachers at WCHS since 1975.

After several summer conversations with the principal, department chair (not then a University of Kentucky graduate) and members of the department, the entire department of eight people decided to participate, specifically to work with the Masters with Initial Certification (MIC) students. Seven years later, the department is still hosting as many as six students for the entire year, four mornings a week in the fall semester and fulltime for student teaching in the spring semester. Although the school has its fourth principal since 1993 and although one teacher has retired, another moved up in administration, and five other teachers have come and several gone, the collaboration remains solid and unquestioned. That is partially due to the stability of the core faculty: Morford, an earlier graduate of the University of Kentucky undergraduate program and chair since 1994, and Carey, Fannin, and Heasley, non-traditional students and graduates of the MIC over the last 12 years. Another reason is the collaborative culture of the department as described in Fickel (1999). One illustration of this department as what Fickel calls a professional learning community is the fact that they pool their remuneration for student teachers and put it into the department fund for materials.

The social studies placements in 1993 paved the way for WCHS to become the second professional development-like school in 1996. For four years Morford, the

social studies chair, has been the liaison with the university teacher educator for the interdisciplinary cohort of approximately 20 teacher education students who spend the first nine weeks of the Masters with Initial Certification program at WCHS. The fall semester requires observation of all teachers in a department and then aiding and teaching with several. Projects include: l) working with an individual or small group of students, typically tutoring; 2) completing a department or school project; and 3) planning and teaching an interdisciplinary lesson(s). At WCHS the department projects for social studies have included: developing a course on cultural diversity, organizing a guidebook for a ninth grade field trip to Washington, DC, creating a two CD set of music for humanities and a CD of internet resources, and cataloguing multicultural resources for the Kentucky Department of Education website. Sometimes there are connections from one year to the next. One student's proposal for a cultural diversity course in 1993 was the basis for the next year's group to develop and teach the first cultural diversity course.

Currently, secondary social studies teacher education students are assigned to four interdisciplinary cohorts at four different high schools in central Kentucky. Occasionally, teacher education students in other subject areas will remain at a school for the whole year, but after the first nine weeks of observation and aiding they will be placed with an individual teacher for the rest of the year. In contrast, social studies students, assigned as a group to a department and continuing at the same high school all year, will teach with at least two or three different teachers. They do visit the other three schools and another "reform" high school for a day each during the year, and each arranges a mini-placement of a week long at a school of his/her choice at the end of spring semester. At all four high schools, they will typically have the opportunity to teach at least U.S. and world history and ninth grade integrated social studies or law and justice. At WCHS they may also teach in the new required humanities course, for which social studies teachers are certified in Kentucky, and in one or more electives, including cultural diversity, geography, psychology, sociology, political science, Kentucky Studies, Law and Justice, and AP US History and AP Psychology.

In spring 1999 Wilson, the teacher educator, interviewed students and teachers at all four schools about the year-long placement with a department. Both students and teaching saw the opportunity of observing and working with a variety of teachers and styles of teaching as a positive attribute of the program. Students liked being in the same school for the whole year because they got to know how the department and school worked and what teachers' expectations were before student teaching. In addition, they felt they got to know their students well. Students also talked about the unity and helpfulness of the departments, the responsibility they were given, and the opportunity to sink or swim and to try again in another class.

Those interviews were the rationale for continuing and improving the year-long placement with a department. This model has apparently become more popular around the country as the idea of a single cooperating teacher for a student teacher's experience begins to change and exposure to a variety of teaching styles and an increased emphasis on collaboration become important (Zeichner and Miller, 1997).

Carey, Fannin, Morford, and Wilson, however, have not read this literature or talked to others using a similar model to ours. Our model is essentially home-grown, a response to our concerns and what we perceive as the needs of our students.

The current study, instead of getting evaluations from students just finishing the program, asked alumni about long-term impact of the department itself on those graduates now teaching. As Fannin wrote when we first began to talk about this study:

> *The most obvious advantage of working in this system is the extensive network available to me. Expertise in nearly any area of the social sciences is as close as a quick e-mail away. Ideas for projects, advice on how to handle difficult students, or the best new professional development opportunities are but a few of the benefits of being a member of this network. The second, and most valuable, advantage is the ability to exert some degree of influence on the field of social studies education. We all know that teachers are afforded the opportunity to affect the future in countless way through literally thousands of former students. My colleagues and I can multiply that number by the 30 plus student teachers we have had the privilege to work with in seven short years. Imagine the impact we have on the future.*

We completed this study because we wanted to discover and describe that impact.

Report on Demographic Information and Job Satisfaction

During the past seven years WCHS has hosted 36 secondary social studies students in the University of Kentucky's Masters with Initial Certification program. For this study we attempted to contact and get information from all 36. We could not track down three at all and five chose not to go into teaching for a variety of reasons. The remaining 28 were successful in getting teaching jobs within one year of completing the program: four outside the state of Kentucky and the remaining within the state. The majority secured jobs immediately after graduation and several were able to choose between multiple offers. We interviewed 21 of those teaching by mail or email survey or phone or face to face interview.

Job in education:

Fourteen of the twenty-one are currently high school classroom teachers
Three teach at middle school
One is an elementary principal
One works for the state department of education as a professional development provider
One is pursuing a doctorate in political science and one in curriculum and instruction

Extracurricular involvement:

Nine coach various athletic teams
Eight sponsor various social studies clubs, for example Kentucky Youth Assembly, Kentucky United Nations, or student government
Two coach Academic Team
Four work with diversity/equity clubs
Eight are or have been involved in curriculum development at their schools
Nine have attended state and/or national social studies conferences
Three are technology leaders in their schools

Future plans:

Nineteen plan to continue working in public education
Seven plan to continue indefinitely as classroom teachers
Seven plan to eventually move into administration
Four plan to eventually move into counseling
Two hope to teach at college level
One is considering a doctorate in instructional design

Concerning job satisfaction, we asked "What do you like most about teaching?" Fifteen listed their relationship with students as the best part of the job.

I like seeing the 'at risk' students 'light up' when they succeed in my classroom.
Tom, middle school

I love that every day, class, and student is different. I love the challenges involved with working with my diverse students.
Heather, now ESL teacher

I enjoy the students.
Andrew, teaching on army base

This past March I was wished a happy birthday by 450 students. You can't beat that for job satisfaction.
Gary, elementary principal

Six listed the content as the aspect of teaching they liked most.

I enjoy the creativity of presenting the material in my own way. I love the content.
Toni, high school American Studies

I like the opportunities for creative teaching. I wrote a completely thematic curriculum for seventh world civ this summer.
Marc, middle school

I enjoy being in a content area that is my niche in life.

Ginger, high school

I take great pride in knowing that students leave my class at the end of the year with a deep understanding of the social sciences and a feeling of accomplishment at the breadth of their studies. They interpret Machiavelli and apply the ideas of modern politics and compare the early Hindu caste system to modern American economic stratification.

Jason, doctoral student talking about his high school teaching

We also asked "What do you like least about teaching?"

Twelve mentioned paperwork, administrative concerns and supervision responsibilities. Five mentioned class size. Five listed salary. "I dislike the salary and having to work a second job," said high school teacher Heather, and Jenny, with the state department noted, "I dislike making less money than my friends who dropped out of college."

Five wrote about emphasis on the state accountability test. "I believe it causes teachers to teach how to take a test," said Rodney, a high school teacher. Amy, a middle school teacher, said "There's no time to teach something not on the CATS test."

Six wrote or talked about school culture.

Working with kids who don't want to be here.

Ginger, high school

Lack of concern for grades by many of the students and the lack of discipline due to the bad home life of many of the kids.

Spencer, high school

How little power the school system has over totally disruptive students and those students unable to function in the classroom due to a behavioral disorder classification.

Tom, middle school

To the teacher authors, the job satisfaction and dissatisfaction responses seem similar to our own feelings.

What student teachers gain

Working with multiple supervising teachers – a whole department – during the student teaching year might seem, at first glance, to be confusing. How does the student teacher gain confidence and classroom savvy when he or she is working with up to four social studies teachers who all teach different courses? Those of us in the WCHS social studies department have learned how well our system works for us and our own students, as well as the student teachers while they are with us, but just how

beneficial is this model to our alumni after they leave us? We asked the following questions:

How did your experience at WCHS impact your teaching?

What strategies/activities do you use which you saw in action and/or tried at WCHS, such as simulations, current events emphasis, teaching about controversial issues?

What curriculum development work have you done?

How do you relate/interact with your department, other departments? Are they any ways in which the WCHS social studies department was a model?

What is your philosophy of teaching? How was it influenced by your experience at WCHS and by the program?

The results of our letters, email, phone calls, and meetings point to three areas of impact:

- access to a more diverse group of students;
- exposure to a wider variety of teaching philosophies and methods
- the use of the WCHS social studies department as a model for interaction among teachers.

The student teaching environment at WCHS provided for a richer experience, one that allowed the preservice teacher to develop a more personal style, glean invaluable tips from the veterans, and grow as an educator.

Nearly every respondent to our interview questions mentioned the diverse student attitudes and behaviors that student teachers must work with during their tenure at WCHS. From one class period to the next, a student teacher may move from an advanced placement class of juniors and seniors to a general class of freshmen. The instructional approaches and/or classroom management strategies used in one setting could be woefully inadequate in the other. Finding out that every AP student is not self motivated or that students in general courses can achieve at high levels can be a revelation for student teachers. Gary, a high school teacher, said, "I saw that even the advanced placement students misbehaved in some fashion and had problems in their lives. I also witnessed high level discussions comparable to a college seminar in a freshman class."

The more experience student teachers get in diverse settings, the more confident they will be when they get that first job, as Jenny, now with the state department discovered: "I had a really smooth first year of teaching because I had a more realistic idea of what it would be like after working with a diverse population."

Student teachers often mentioned that they enjoy working with students, but that some students are more difficult to reach than others. As every experienced teacher knows, this is a challenge we face daily, and we all face it differently. Observing and working with a variety of experienced teachers can give student teachers a better opportunity to learn different ways of reaching students.

Each teacher had a different way of getting a student's attention and respect which helped me figure out my own style.
Amy, middle school

My work with academic plus and the 'at risk' students in that class was outstanding and has proven to be an area I continue to focus on.
Tom, middle school

I enjoyed the involvement with many different types of students. Now that I am working in two different schools, this experience has helped me greatly adjust to diverse groups of students at each school.
John, high school

My philosophy at this point would be that all students are different and that they require individual focus, different motivations, have different outlooks. The WCHS department was instrumental in that respect because you guys seemed to be able to break down the individual problems that each student was having.
Rodney, high school

These student teachers found that working with more than one teacher during the student teaching year can, in effect, provide a richer environment that will better prepare the future teacher. The diversity in students is one ingredient in this environment.

The second ingredient is the exposure to all the different teaching styles found in the department. As we listened to former student teachers, it became clear that we provided more of a model in this area than we ever imagined. Our students were learning to be jugglers, to wear different hats, to understand the whole school.

Exposure to different methods of teaching and strategies positively impacted my teaching.
Frank, high school

Probably the most valuable thing I learned from my student teaching experience was how different teachers operate in their classrooms. I was able to observe at least seven teachers and they each had their own style. This has helped me to adapt to different situations and become a better teacher.
Amy, middle school

These new teachers meshed the best of each supervising teacher's style with their own philosophies and personalities. It was a heady experience to interview former student teachers and find that this department had such a profound effect on so many of them. For example, almost every respondent said something like "We hit current events every day, like we saw you guys do."

Practically every teacher I observed at WCHS influenced my teaching style – I saw, for example, mock trials, historical interviews, panels of historic figures, different types of writing assignments.

Rodney, high school

I witnessed multiple teaching strategies, but more importantly had access to tons of resources. I found a set of History Alive materials in a closet at my new school and pulled them out and used them because I had had experience with History Alive at WCHS.

John, high school

My WCHS experience was evidence for the theory I already had – that students need to find things out for themselves or they aren't really learning. My variety of experiences proved that.

Michelle, high school

These experiences enabled the student teachers to have confidence that their core beliefs about teaching didn't have to follow one prescribed model. They observed and then tried out many styles and strategies of teaching as they found their own ways of teaching.

I think the variety of approaches influenced me the most. I was really encouraged to develop my own style. To try new methods – not just to rely on just one.

Toni, American Studies

The third ingredient in the rich environment this model of student teaching provides might also be considered the most important – interaction with a cohesive and forward-moving department. The traditional model of student teaching (one student with one teacher) isolates the student teacher from a "working department" atmosphere. At WCHS we integrate the student teachers into the department as working members who can not just learn from but contribute to the process of department growth. When we first began our interviews, we wondered if heir experiences as contributing members could influence other established departments in other districts. What we found was gratifying.

I love the team atmosphere, and I think it affects everyone that comes through the program. I am very close with my team here as well.

Tom, middle school

How the department interacted – this set a cooperative standard for me.

Toni, high school

My goal has always been for my department to live up to the example at WCHS. At first, it wasn't that way, then we started to come together and work democratically.

Michelle, high school

Our department is very interactive. Personally, I admired the nature of your department as far as flexibility, personality, focus, task orientation.
Rodney, high school

WCHS was definitely a model as to how a department can work together to make the school a better place to learn.
Spencer, high school

It was the best conglomeration of teachers. The level of quality was high. I learned from all of you. Each of you was different and I'd never seen a team work together like that.
John, high school

When I became a department chair, I worked really hard to build respect through our differences and I know my time at WCHS helped me to do this.
Jenny, state department

I have referred many times in the past six years to the way in which the social studies department interacted at WCHS. I have tried to get my faculty and staff climate at my current school to mirror the climate at WCHS.
Gary, elementary principal

The only exception to the positive comments came from a graduate who indicated that his current assignment on a military base was so different that it rendered his public school experience almost meaningless. Except for that graduate, all the student teachers seem to have gained valuable knowledge about how to interact within a department, and how important teamwork, cooperation, and respect can be within the ranks of professional teachers.

Our responses and questions

Of course, we are pleased that our influence continues. However, we do have questions.

We worry that the program has not worked for some students. A few students, perhaps three or four, seem to have slipped through the cracks. They completed the program but did not develop into strong teachers. What happens to the student who isn't assertive, confident? We need to make sure they have as much flexibility as possible while also being certain they get the structure they need. For example, at the request of our student teachers this year, we are organizing a home base teacher for each of our six student teachers. Marc, now in his second year teaching at middle school, said his "free" experience at WCHS gave him confidence. "I worked with

instructors with wait time, who asked 'What are you going to do today?' I may have criticized them then but I learned to think independently."

Marc alerted us to another possible influence. He explained that he was trying to persuade his colleagues to think of themselves as social studies teachers rather than as history teachers. "We aren't doing well on the state tests in economics and humanities, and I think that is because the other teachers consider themselves as history teachers. In the UK program and at Woodford County we learned to be social studies teachers." Is that another contribution our department makes? Carey currently teaches Geography, Humanities, and World Civ, Fannin teaches AP U.S. history, Political Science, and Kentucky Studies, Morford teaches Cultural Diversity and Psychology, but we call ourselves social studies teachers.

We are interested that so many of our alumni seem to want to go beyond their classrooms to change the bigger picture. Is that partially because they saw change at Woodford County, because they saw us develop new courses, participate in the Kentucky Education Reform Act? They seem to be able to see possibilities. They can imagine. We know that for several alumni the difference between WCHS and the school where they teach is difficult. One respondent no longer teaching said he couldn't stay where he was because the department was so different from the WCHS social studies department. Perhaps we haven't communicated to students how hard this department collegiality is, how much we have to work at it. They don't know the history of our conscious decision to work as a team because we disliked not sharing ideas or being supportive. The decision to work as a team in the department was made in the same year we began working with University of Kentucky and the Masters with Initial Certification students. Working with those students has, in some ways, pushed us to continue to work with each other, too.

We know we have shared values and we trust each other. A core of us has shared experiences. The we are the teacher educator, Wilson, and the whole department. The core is Wilson and Carey, Fannin, Heasley, and Morford. Besides going through the social studies program Wilson directs, we four teachers participated in an experimental humanities and technology class which Wilson taught in summer 1998. Three of our favorite alumni were also class members. We read, engaged in online discussions, and attended arts events and films together, among other experiences. Does the fact that we try to model equitable, enjoyable school/university collaboration make a difference? We do respect and like each other.

In any case, we proceed. Our students are teaching for us as we speak and developing units for their pedagogy class with Wilson that they will teach in our classes next semester. Our collaboration continues, and we are excited about continuing to influence the next generation of social studies teachers.

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